

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 are pending.

Drawings

The indication that the drawings as filed were accepted is noted.

Foreign Priority

The indication that the foreign priority document has been received and placed in the file is noted.

Information Disclosure Statement

The indication that the documents on the Information Disclosure Statement filed on August 20, 2003 have been considered is noted.

Abstract

A new Abstract has been provided which is more consistent with U. S. practice.

Reply to Rejections

First Rejection

Claims 1-6 were rejected to under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention, as set forth in Section 1 of the Office Action.

On pages 2 and 3, the Examiner detailed why the claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. The Examiner's attention to the details of the claims is greatly appreciated and expedites prosecution.

As necessary, the remaining claims have been amended to alleviate the Examiner's concerns regarding the wording of the claims.

For the reasons set forth above, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

Second Rejection

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U. S. Patent No. 6,000,689 (Furuki et al.), as set forth in Section 2 of the Office Action.

Claim 1, which is an independent claim, has been amended to provide that "the sheet separating means and the limiting means are integrally disposed."

In Furuki, the sheet separating means and the limiting means of the sheet feeding apparatus are not integrally disposed but are separate from each other. Furthermore, in Furuki, the sheet separating means (including lifter 6) is not disposed adjacently to the rotatable feeding means (pick roller 3) and the sheet is displaced by pushing from the opposite side of the rotatable feeding means (pick roller 3). Accordingly, Furuki does not disclose the feature of claim 2. Moreover, Furuki does not disclose the limiting means which aligns leading edges of leftover sheets separated from the one sheet.

As each and every limitation of the claims is not specifically or inherently in the reference, a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 is not viable.

Although claim 1 has been amended, the totality of the structure of claim 1 is not obvious from the reference. The dependent claims are considered patentable at least for the same reasons as the base claim.

For the reasons set forth above, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

Third Rejection

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U. S. Patent No. 6,217,017 (Yamazaki).

As explained above, claim 1 has been amended to include the feature that “the sheet separating means and the limiting means are integrally disposed.” This feature is not shown either specifically or inherently in Yamazaki.

Additionally, there would be no motivating reason to modify Yamazaki to include the feature now set forth in amended claim 1.

For the reasons set forth above, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

Claims 4-6

As claims 4-6 were not rejected on art but were only rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, as the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 has been overcome, it is considered that claims 4-6 now contain subject matter that is allowable.

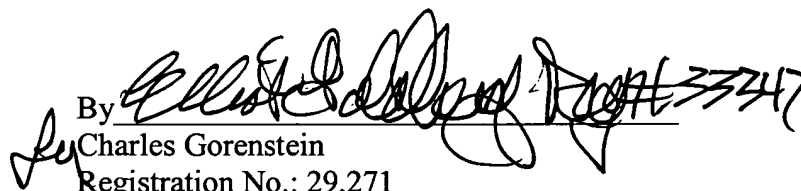
Conclusion

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Elliot A. Goldberg (Reg. No. 33,347) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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